

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) respond to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) announcement of fee increases for immigration applications, naturalization applications, and mandatory fingerprint checks.

CAPAC and CHC issued a letter to USCIS in December, 2006 requesting a copy of the Comprehensive Fee Study conducted by USCIS. The letter also expressed both caucuses' concern regarding the need to balance funding of USCIS operations with assuring that individuals who are eligible for services are able to afford them.

Rep. Honda (CA-15): "Two-thirds of the 14 million Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) in the United States are foreign-born. A 66% fee increase would have a significant negative impact on the API community," said Congressman Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of CAPAC. "To ensure family unity and the opportunity that America promises to those who wish to contribute, it is important that the naturalization process remain fair and accessible. CAPAC looks forward to working closely with USCIS to ensure that any increases are justified and reasonable."

Rep. Abercrombie (HI-1): "If these kinds of fees had been in effect over the last two hundred years, millions of millions of immigrants who forged the foundation of our nation would have stayed where they were," said Congressman Neil Abercrombie (HI-1), Chair of the CAPAC's Immigration Task Force. "These proposed fee changes raise serious questions about fundamental fairness for immigrants and their families. We cannot price immigration services to put legal admission to the country and the dream of American citizenship out of the reach of hard working people."

Rep. Baca (CA-43): "Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus understand that fees need to be reassessed from time to time," said Congressman Joe Baca (CA-43), Chair of the CHC. "However, given today's political climate, the continuing discrimination that immigrants face around the country, and the need for immigrants to be up to date with their status, we believe it's our duty to assure USCIS services are affordable. We will be closely examining this decision and seeking an explanation for the reasoning behind it."

Rep. Gutierrez (IL-4): "These proposed fee hikes are a glaring example of the government imposing a higher price on its customers, while continuing to offer inadequate, inefficient and ineffective service," said Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez (IL-4), Chair of CHC's Immigration Task Force. "Prospective citizens are not asking for a free ride -- they are simply asking for fairness, and for a broken bureaucracy, with an unacceptable backlog, to stop trying to fix its failures by imposing unreasonable fees on low-income, working families. For too long, USCIS has burdened prospective citizens with indirect costs not related to the application process. I look forward to reversing that trend in a way that makes sense for applicants and for the agency."

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .